

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 3049

USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2530

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, US

SUBJECT: ASSOCIATED PRESS DIFFICULTIES IN DAMASCUS

1. PRESS ATTACHE TODAY DISCUSSED CONTENTS OF REFTEL WITH AP-BEIRUT BUREAU CHIEF NICK LUDINGTON, WHO EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR AMBASSADOR'S CONTINUING INTEREST IN AP AND ASKED THAT FOLLOWING POINTS BE PASSED ALONG.
2. AP HAS NO INTENTION OF TRANSFERRING FARES TO ANOTHER COUNTRY. IF FARES HAS NOT RECEIVED HIS CREDENTIALS BY MARCH 1, LUDINGTON MERELY PLANS MAKE WRITTEN REPRESENTATION TO MINISTER OF INFORMATION ON HIS BEHALF. FYI, LUDINGTON BELIEVES IT IS QUITE LIKELY THAT FARES HAS FALLEN VICTIM TO POWER JOCKEYING AMONG SYRIAN OFFICIALS BUT ALSO BELIEVES THAT FARES IS OVERSTATING VALUE OF HIS SERVICES TO AP.
3. LUDINGTON PEFERS TO SEEK SOLUTION TO FARES'S DIFFICULTIES WITHOUT AMBASSADORIAL INTERVENTION SPECIFICALLY ON AP'S BEHALF. HE WOULD, HOWEVER, WELCOME INCLUSION OF FARES' (AND HIS) PROBLEMS IN GENERAL DISCUSSION OF ROLE AND STATUS OF AMERICAN MEDIA REPS IN SYRIA.
4. LUDINGTON FEELS THAT TWO ASPECTS OF ABOVE MERIT SPECIAL ATTENTION. FIRSTLY, THERE IS NEED FOR CLEAR

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POLICY ON ADMISSION OF JOURNALISTS TO SYRIA. DOES A

"BLACKLIST" EXIST? SECONDLY, IN ORDER TO PREVENT ARRESTS
AND DETENTIONS, THERE IS NEED FOR CLEAR PROCEDURE OF PRIOR
CLEARANCE FOR STORIES FILED FROM DAMASCUS.

5. FYI, LUDINGTON HIMSELF PLANS STAY OUT OF SYRIA
UNTIL SUCH TIME AS HIS STATUS WITH SARG IS
CRYSTAL-CLEAR.
HOUGHTON

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NNN

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